

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

64

ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /016 R

66617

DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:P.JOHNSON

APPROVED BY: S/S-O:P.JOHNSON

----- 023191

O 171947Z OCT 75 ZFF6

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY AIRCRAFT IMMEDIATE

INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 4043 SENT SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT
DATED OCT 17.

QUOTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4043

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, US, LE

SUBJECT: DIALOG WITH SYRIA ON LEBANESE SITUATION

REF: STATE 243490

1. SUMMARY: MET SEPARATELY WITH ASAD AND KHADDAM
OCTOBER 16 TO BEGIN DIALOG WITH SYRIA ON LEBANESE
SITUATION (REFTEL). BOTH PRESIDENT AND FONMIN
REACTED FAVORABLY TO OUR INITIATIVE. ASAD SAID HE
WOULD WELCOME FURTHER CONTACTS ON THIS SUBJECT. HE
ALLUDED TO US INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANESE CRISIS IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

CONNECTION OUR SUPPORT OF SINAI AGREEMENT. NEITHER

HAD SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT WE MIGHT USEFULLY DO BEYOND
COUNSELLING LEBANESE TO STOP FIGHTING AND WORK FOR
POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. END SUMMARY

2. PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS WERE CONSIDERABLY MORE EXTENDED
THAN THOSE OF KHADDAM. IN COURSE TWO HOUR MEETING ASAD
DISCOURSED AT LENGTH ON THEME THAT LEBANESE PROBLEM WAS
BASICALLY ONE FOR ARAB NATION TO ASSIST IN SOLVING.
LEBANESE CRISIS IS POLITICAL NOT RELIGIOUS IN ORIGIN.
THE VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS, HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY
PPS AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIALIST FRONT, CONTAINED REPRESENTA-
TIVES OF ALL SECTS. RE OUR IMPRESSION THAT SYRIANS MIGHT
FEEL US SUPPORTS HARD LINE CHRISTIAN POSITION, PRESIDENT
SAID THIS WAS NOT IN FACT THE VIEW OF ANY RESPONSIBLE
SYRIAN.

3. HOWEVER, ASAD CONTINUED, "MOST ARABS" HAVE IMPRESSION
THAT US IN PLAYING ROLE IN LEBANESE CRISIS IN
CONNECTION WITH THE SINAI AGREEMENT. (HE DID NOT REPEAT
ALLEGATION IN SYRIAN PRESS THAT WE WERE MEDDLING IN
LEBANON TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM SINAI AGREEMENT.) HE
DID NOT PURSUE THIS POINT NOR DID HE CHALLENGE MY
ASSURANCES THAT OUR EFFORTS IN LEBANESE CRISIS WERE
SOLELY DEDICATED TO ENCOURAGING ALL PARTIES TO WORK OUT
A JUST POLITICAL SOLUTION. (INTERESTING
Y, KHADDAM WHO
NORMALLY IS THE MORE OVERTLY SUSPICIOUS OF US MOTIVES,
DID NOT AIR THIS ACCUSATION.) ASAD SAID HE WOULD NOT
DWELL ON THE SINAI AGREEMENT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED IT HAD
RAISED PROBLEMS IN OUR OWN DIALOG BUT HE SAW NO REASON
TO LET THIS INTERFERE WITH OUR BILATERAL REALTIONS. HE
TWICE STRESSED THAT HE FOUND OUR EXCHANGES USEFUL.
WE DISCUSSED PROPOSITION THAT MUCH OF LEBANON'S PRESENT
DILEMMA HAD BEEN SELF-CREATED BY GOL'S NEGLECT OF
COUNTRY'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS DURING PAST GENERATION.
HE SAID HE AGREED WITH THIS BUT AT LATER POINT IN CONVERSATION
NOTED "THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT CERTAIN OUTSIDE FACTORS ARE ALSO
INVOLVED." HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

4. PRESIDENT PROBED FOR BACKGROUND OF OUR COMMENT RE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

ISRAELI REACTION TO INTERVENTION OF FOREIGN MILITARY
FORCES IN LEBANON (REFTEL PARA 3). ASSURED HIM THIS WAS
MERELY OUR BEST INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT AND REPRESENTED
NO US COLLUSION WITH ISRAELIS. HE APPEARED TO ACCEPT
THIS. ASAD THEN EMPHASIZED THAT SYRIAN POLICY TOWARDS
LEBANON DOES NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION WHAT ISRAEL
MAY OR MAY NOT DO. SYRIA WOULD FULFILL ITS DUTY TOWARDS
LEBANON NO MATTER WHAT. IF LEBANON WANTED THE HELP OF

SYRIAN ARMED FORCES, THESE FORCES WOULD BE PUT AT LEBANON'S DISPOSITION TO BE PLACED ANYWHERE IN LEBANON, FROM THE EXTREME SOUTH TO NORTH. HE WAXED RHETORICAL WITH FURTHER COMMENT, "ANYTIME ISRAEL SEEKS TO CONFRONT US, WE WILL FEEL NO RESTRAINT. WE WILL BE PREPARED TO FACE ISRAEL NOT ONLY IN SYRIA BUT ANYWHERE IN THE ARAB HOMELAND." THE PRESIDENT THEN PAUSED AND ADDED WITH A QUIET SMILE, "HOWEVER, WE HAVE NOT BEEN ASKED TO SEND OUR FORCES INTO LEBANON UP TO NOW."

5. ASAD ASKED IF WE HAD ANY SPECIFIC IDEAS TO PROPOSE CONCERNING OUR ROLE. I SAID WE HAD NOT; ONE POINT OF THIS MEETING WAS TO ELICIT SYRIAN IDEAS. THIS CLEARLY PLEASED HIM AND HE EXPOUNDED ON THEME THAT SYRIA HAD PURSUED POLICY THROUGHOUT THE RECENT MONTHS OF MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH ALL FACTIONS. IT REFUSED SUPPORT THE VIEWS OF ANY SINGLE CLIQUE. I SAID THIS CLEARLY WAS OUR POSITION AS WELL AND SHOWED THERE WAS INDEED IMPORTANT COMMON GROUND BETWEEN US. ASAD SAID KHADDAM HAD ATTENDED FIRST SESSION OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE ONLY BECAUSE LEBANESE HAD INSISTED UPON THIS IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION FOR SYRIAN ROLE. AFTER NOTING THERE WERE STILL A FEW TROUBLE SPOTS AND EXCHANGES OF FIRE IN BEIRUT, ASAD COMMENTED THAT PERHAPS THESE HAD BEEN STIMULATED BY THE CAIRO MEETING OF ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS. CAIRO CONFEREES HAD BEEN WRONG TO MEET WITHOUT FIRST ASCERTAINING VIEWPOINTS OF THE LEBANESE PARTIES.

6. ASKED IF HE WERE MORE OR LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN HE HAD BEEN A MONTH AGO, ASAD REPLIED HE FELT SITUATION HAD STABILIZED AND RETURNED AGAIN TO THEME OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN SAYING, "BUT THE ISSUE DOES NOT RELATE SOLELY TO LEBANON; IF IT DID, I WOULD BE COMPLETELY OPTIMISTIC."

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

HE CONCLUDED THAT NO LEBANESE HAD ANYTHING TO GAIN BY CONTINUING THE CONFLICT. TO MY COMMENT THAT I HAD THOUGHT LAST SPRING LEBANESE HAD LEARNED THAT LESSON AFTER FIRST ROUND, ASAD REPLIED THAT SOME STUDENTS HAD TO PAY A HIGHER PRICE THAN OTHERS FOR THEIR LESSONS. ISRAEL, FOR INSTANCE, DID NOT LEARN ENOUGH FROM THE OCTOBER WAR.

7. KHADDAM WAS MORE RETICENT THAN ASAD. AFTER LISTENING CAREFULLY, HIS FIRST COMMENT WAS THAT SYRIA MADE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS IN DEALING WITH THE LEBANESE CONFLICT. IT HAD GOOD TIES WITH ALL SIDES; IT WAS CONCERNED WITH AND FOR ALL OF THEM. IT WORKED FOR THE SAFETY AND UNITY OF LEBANON. ITS EFFORTS WERE TO TRY TO STOP THE FIGHTING SO THAT THE VOICE OF REASON WOULD PREVAIL. HE FELT THE SITUATION WAS CONTINUING TO

STABILIZE. SYRIA WAS FOR ITS PART CONTINUING TO EXERT EFFORTS FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND TO ELIMINATE ARMED CONFLICT.

8. RE WHAT SYRIA CONSIDERS WE MIGHT USEFULLY DO, KHADDAM COMMENTED THE BEST US ROLE WOULD BE TO DO AS SYRIA, I.E., TO ENCOURAGE VARIOUS PARTIES TO WORK FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND AGAINST ARMED CONFLICT. I SAID THIS WAS, OF COURSE, OUR BASIC AIM AND REFLECTED IN EVERY CONVERSATION OUR AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT HAD WITH THE LEBANESE LEADERSHIP. WE KNOW IT WAS NOT IN OUR INTERESTS TO BE IDENTIFIED AS THE SUPPORTER OF ANY SINGLE CLIQUE IN LEBANON. KHADDAM AGREED, SAYING SYRIANS TRIED TO AVOID THIS AS WELL BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER HELP ATTAIN A SOLUTION. ASKED IF HE HAD ANY MORE SPECIFIC SUGGESIONS, KHADDAM SAID HE HAD NONE AT PRESENT BUT WOULD GIVE IT FURTHER THOUGHT.

9. COMMENT:

BOTH MEN HEARD MY PRESENTATION THROUGH WITHOUT INTERRUPTION. ASAD, AS IS HIS HABIT WHEN CONCENTRATING AND PERHAPS ALSO WHEN HE IS ON EDGE, CLICKED HIS PRAYER BEADS LOUDLY. KHADDAM WAS EXHAUSTED FROM HIS MOSCOW TRIP AND A DAY-LONG SERIES OF MEETINGS N HIS FIRST DAY BACK IN DAMASCUS. BOTH MEN GAVE EVERY SIGN OF APPRECIATING
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 247256 TOSEC 160002

AND WELCOMING OUR INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS SUBJECT OF LEBANON WITH THEM. THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED AT OUR DESCRIPTION OF SYRIAN EFFORTS IN LEBANON AS CONSTRUCTIVE. OUR WORDS OF CAUTION ABOUT AN ISRAELI REACTION WERE ABSORBED AND IDD NOT STRIKE THEM AS A THREAT.

10. IT IS SIGNIFICANT OF PRESENT ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING SYRO-US CONTACTS THAT THIS WAS MY FIRST MEETING WITH ASAD WHICH PRESIDENCY DID NOT SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCE TO MEDIA. MURPHY
UNQUOTE I

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE247256
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:P.JOHNSON
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750361-0331
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751046/aaaaboty.tel
Line Count: 204
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 243490
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DIALOG WITH SYRIA ON LEBANESE SITUATION
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, US, LE, (ASAD), (KHADDAM)
To: SECRETARY AIRCRAFT
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006